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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 005200

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA/FO, SA/A, S/CT, EUR/RPM
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFA-A, CG CJTF-76

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2015

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SUBJECT: QANOONI ELECTED SPEAKER OF WOLESI JIRGA IN SECOND
ROUND

Classified By: ACTING DCM ANGUS SIMMONS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (U) KABUL MP YOUNUS QANOONI WON THE VOTE FOR SPEAKER OF THE WOLESI JIRGA (LOWER HOUSE) IN A SECOND ROUND OF VOTING LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 21. IN THE INITIAL ROUND OF VOTING, QANOONI TOOK 108 VOTES; KABUL MP USTAD ABDRAH ALRASOUL SAYAFF HAD 88 VOTES; PAKTIKA MP PEER SAYED ISHAQ GAILANI, 16 VOTES; KABUL MP SHUKRIYA BARAKZAI, 9 VOTES; AND KANDAHAR MP NOORULHAQ OLUMI, 5 VOTES. THE INITIAL VOTE DID NOT PROVIDE THE SIMPLE MAJORITY NECESSARY TO GIVE QANOONI THE SPEAKERSHIP, AND A RUNOFF BETWEEN THE TWO TOP CANDIDATES ENSUED. QANOONI WON WITH A TOTAL OF 122 VOTES TO SAYYAF'S 117.

2. (C) COMMENT: IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THE PARLIAMENT HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF FRENETIC HORSE-TRADING, AS MANY CANDIDATES VIED FOR THE TOP POSITION. QANOONI, WITH HIS PRAGMATIC POLITICAL SENSE, WILL LIKELY PROVE AN EASIER INTERLOCUTOR THAN SAYYAF, A STAUNCHLY ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST.
NEUMANN